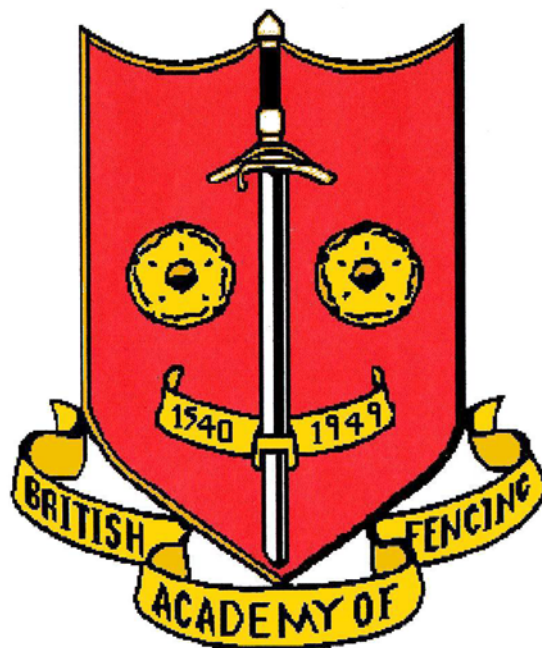


The British Academy of Fencing



Child Protection Good Practice Guidelines

Extracts from the Child Protection Policy of the BAF

Child Protection Guidelines for Good Practice

Introduction

The British Academy of Fencing believes that everyone has a responsibility to protect young people from all forms of abuse. Coaches, club officials, competition organisers, parents and friends – all can help and have a role to play.

The Academy is, of course, particularly concerned with the sport of fencing and advocates that everyone involved in this sport has a moral and legal obligation to protect young people

All persons with responsibility for dealing with children (note 1) in any fencing context should familiarise themselves with the Sports Coach UK/NSPCC document “Protecting Children – a guide for sports people” (ISBN 0947850 50 3) where the nature of child abuse and advice on detecting the four main forms of abuse, neglect, physical, sexual and emotional are outlined.

The BAF recommends that everyone connected with fencing adopts the following principles:

- The welfare of young people is paramount;
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All BAF members working in the sport of fencing have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

BAF members are generally not trained to deal with situations of abuse or decide if abuse has occurred. However, they should report any concerns through the appropriate authorities.

1. Promoting Best Practice with Young People

The Academy acknowledges that good practice when dealing with young people is essential. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within the sport of fencing:

Good practice means:

- always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and by encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets).
- If manual support is necessary, the reasons should be clearly explained to the child and, if possible, the parents/carers.
- treating all young people equally and with respect and dignity.
- always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person or to share a room with them).
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decision-making process.
- making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support or guidance is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the (Coach Education Programme and the BAF Code of Ethics and Conduct). Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when the young person is moving. Parents and the young people involved should always be consulted and their agreement gained in advance. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual/physical support or guidance and their views should always be carefully considered.
- keeping up-to-date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.

- involving parents wherever possible (e.g. parents should be responsible for their own children in the changing rooms). If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents / teachers / coaches / officials work in pairs.
- ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should always be accompanied by responsible adults of both sexes. (It should, however, be remembered that same-gender abuse can also occur.)
- ensuring that, at tournaments, courses or other residential events, adults do not enter the rooms of young people or invite young people into their rooms.
- being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people.
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing, in writing, parental consent to act *in loco parentis*, in case the need to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment arises.
- keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- requesting written parental consent if members and/or their assistants are required to transport young people in their cars.

Practice to be avoided

Except in emergencies avoid:

- spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people.
- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

If cases arise where the above situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the parent of the young people. For example, a young person sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a young person up at the end of a session.

Practice never to be sanctioned

BAF members and/or their assistants should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- share a room with a young person.
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- make sexually suggestive comments to young people even in fun.
- reduce young people to tears as a form of control.
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- do things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves.
- invite or allow young people to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the young person are informed.

- If you accidentally hurt a pupil or any other young person
- If a pupil or any other young person seems distressed in any manner.
- If a pupil or any other young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a pupil or any other young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Recognition of Poor Practice, Abuse and Bullying

Introduction

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Members and volunteers, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, are not experts at such recognition. However, they do have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about the behaviour of someone (an adult or another young person) towards a young person.

It is generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse: **Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.**

Physical abuse - where someone physically hurts or injures a young person by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing physical harm to a young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a young person whom they are looking after e.g. fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

Examples of physical abuse in fencing may be when the nature and intensity of training and competition exceeds the capacity of a young person's immature and growing body; inappropriate hitting, inappropriate use of drugs.

Sexual abuse - where girls and boys are abused by adults or other young people (both male and female) who use young people to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) is also a form of sexual abuse. In sport, coaching techniques, which involve physical contact with young people, could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of a coach over young fencers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional abuse - is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person such, as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the young person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to young people that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on young people. It may involve causing young people to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted making the young person very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a young person. Emotional abuse in sport may occur if young people are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently.

Neglect

Somebody may abuse or neglect a young person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Neglect in fencing could include a teacher or coach not ensuring young people were safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat or unnecessary risk of injury by not ensuring they wear the correct protective clothing.

Indicators of Abuse

Indications that a young person may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a young person or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another young person.

- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other young people
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

Responding to suspicions or allegations

It is not the responsibility of anyone involved in fencing to take responsibility or to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Members should also take action if they suspect, or have allegations reported to them, of abuse to young people outside of the sporting arena. This may be in the home, at school or in the street.

Action if there are concerns

The following action should be taken if there are concerns.

The person receiving the allegation should;

- remain calm to avoid frightening the young person or whoever is giving the information.
- if it is the young person that has suffered the abuse, reassure them that they are in no way to blame for the occurrence.
- take whatever is disclosed seriously. Remember, it may sometimes be difficult to interpret what is being said especially if the person reporting the abuse has any form of disability.
- keep your questions to a minimum.
- reassure the person making the allegation that they have done the correct thing.
- do not make promises about confidentiality because it will be necessary to pass on the report to others more qualified to deal with the report.
- make a full written report of what has been reported and any evidence seen as soon as possible.

Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a young person has been abused by a member of the BAF should be reported to the BAF Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the young person in question and any other individual who may be at risk.
- The BAF Child Protection Officer will either, refer the allegation to the Social Services department who may involve the Police, or go directly to the Police if *out-of-hours*.
- The parents of the young person will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Services department.
- The BAF Child Protection Officer should also notify the relevant BFA Child Protection Officer who in turn will inform the BFA Child Protection Officer who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If a BFA Club Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the appropriate Manager or in his/her absence the BFA or the BAF Child Protection Officer who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

It is not the responsibility of any member of the BAF to decide if abuse has taken place.

Reports should be passed to the appropriate agency to make such decisions, i.e. social services, police.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a **need to know basis** only. This includes the following people:

- The BAF Child Protection Officer;
- Social Services/Police;
- The parents of the young person who is alleged to have been abused where appropriate;
- The BFA Child Protection Officer;
- The person making the allegation (who should be appraised of the procedure(s) followed);
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a young person). *

**Seek Social Services advice on who should approach alleged abuser.*

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with DataProtection Act (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Support to Deal with the Aftermath

- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to young people, parents and members of the BAF.
- Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.
- **The British Association of Counselling Directory** (available from The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 0870 443 5252, Fax: 0870 443 5160, E-mail: bac@bac.co.uk, Internet: www.bac.co.uk) may be a useful resource.
- Consideration should also be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

Usefull Phone Numbers

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 – helpline for adults who are concerned that a child has been abused and counselling for adults and children who have been abused.

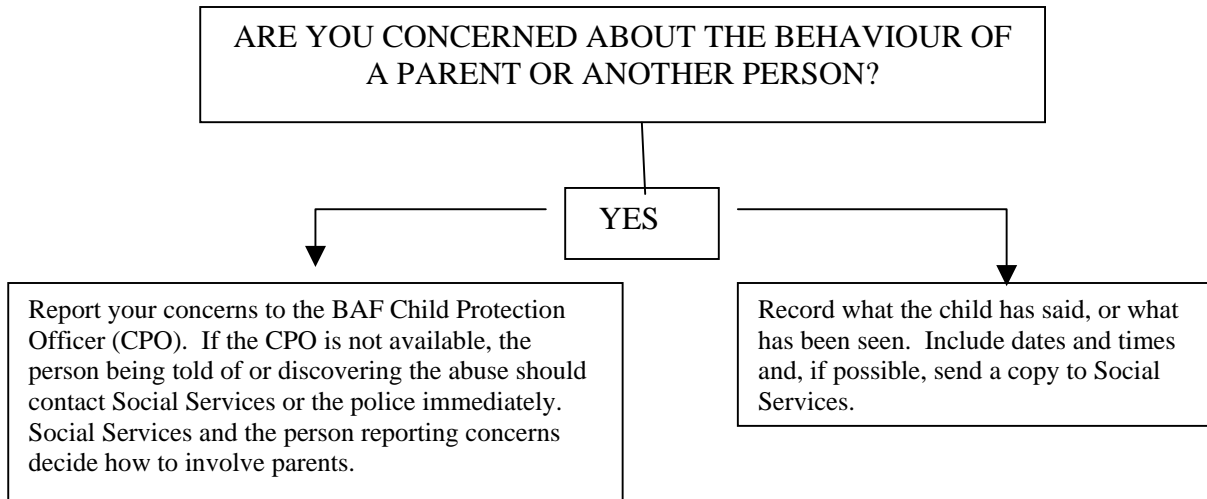
Childline 0800 1111 – Confidential telephone advice for children who are being abused or are at risk.

Notes:

1. Where 'Child/children is referred to within this document you should also infer that is applies to vulnerable adults.

A Quick Guide to Procedures

This guide is designed to advise members of the most appropriate action in relation to concerns about a parent (e.g. outside the immediate sporting environment).



Remember:

- Maintain confidentiality on a *need to know* basis only.
- Ensure the BAF Child Protection Officer follows up with Social Services.
- The Club Child Protection Officer should also report any incident to the BAF and the B.F.A. Child Protection Officers who should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in (sport) and act accordingly.

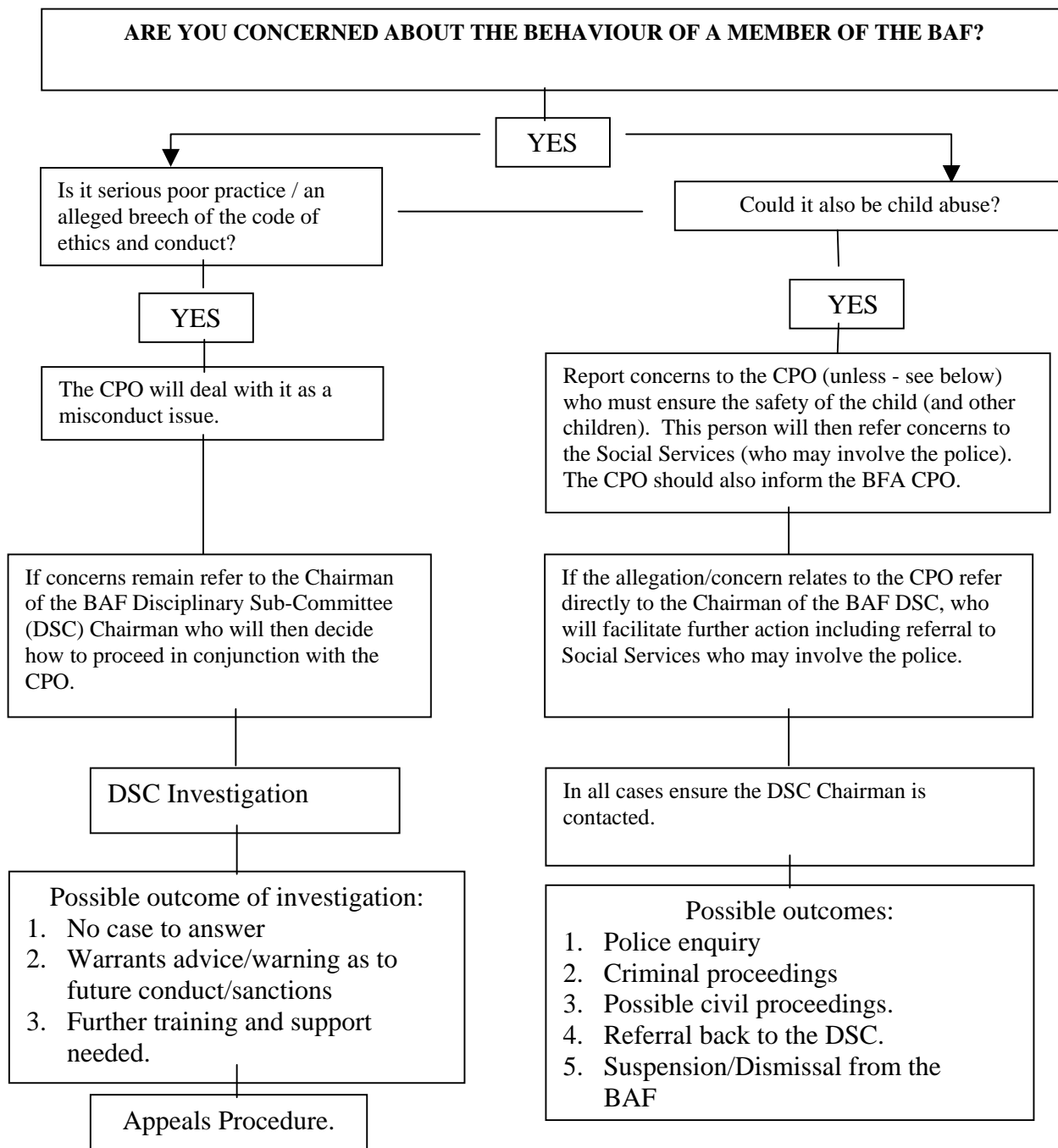
This guide is designed to give the most appropriate action in relation to concerns about a member of the BAF

What to do if there are concerns

Information passed to the Social Services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern.

Information should include the following::

- Name of child
- Age of child and date of birth
- Home address and telephone number
- Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or those of someone else?
- What is the nature of the allegation? Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Behavioural signs, indirect signs?
- Witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If it is not the child making the report has the child concerned been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.



If you do not know from whom to seek advice or are worried about sharing your concerns with a senior colleague, you should contact the Social Services direct (or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111)